

The Hospitals at City Point

The medical care received by the wounded Union soldiers represented the finest in medical attention that that time period had to offer the sick or injured. Of the seven hospitals eventually located at City Point, the Depot Field Hospital was the largest and was able to provide care for 10,000 patients. Surgeon Edward B. Dalton commanded this tremendous operation of 1,200 tents, which blanketed 200 acres. As the weather cooled, 90 log buildings, 20 feet by 50 feet were built to house the wounded, but operations still required that 324 tents remain in use throughout the winter. Nurses ensured that each patient, who had his own bed and washbasin, was clean and comfortable by regularly providing clean linens and clothes.

These hospitals represented self-contained cities. They operated their own supply system very similar to the modern day network. The hospitals requisitioned, received and stored their own supplies. This system functioned so smoothly that the soldiers never lacked the necessary medicine or equipment. The hospitals ran their own laundries, dining facilities and dispensaries. These medical facilities even had running water, pumped from the James River, to assist in keeping the hospital as sanitary as possible under field conditions. These hospitals received vast amounts of assistance from civilian agencies such as the Christian Commission and the U.S. Sanitary Commission. These agencies provided fresh and canned fruit to help lift the health and morale of the soldiers. Each Corps had their own Sanitary Relief Station consisting of two wagons. These relief stations issued 100 tons of canned tomatoes, 1,200 barrels of cucumbers and 17,000 cans of Sauerkraut. The soldiers at City Point even had a lemonade stand to quench their thirst. Usually, two or three ships, loaded with goods supplied by these civilian commissions, sat at City Point waiting to unload their "treats."

